



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

## NEWS RELEASE

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### TWO GRAY WOLF PAIRS SUCCESSFULLY RELOCATED

In an attempt to prevent possible livestock depredations in the Big Hole Valley in Montana, Federal gray wolf specialists successfully relocated two gray wolf pairs from that area to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness in north central Idaho. The August 18-19 effort was completed by a multi-agency team comprised of staff from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Nez Perce Tribe, and USDA Wildlife Services.

Female gray wolf B-80 and her mate were moved into the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area near the Schearer Airstrip. B-100 and B-63 were moved to an area along the Selway River near Moose Creek. Both wolf pairs are collared and their movement will be monitored. The Selway-Bitterroot area was chosen by wolf managers because it contains few livestock and provides excellent habitat and prey base for wolves.

Joe Fontaine, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service gray wolf recovery specialist, said none of the wolves had killed livestock in the Big Hole area. "This move was a preemptive measure to keep livestock losses low in the Big Hole Valley. This is the fourth group of wolves to move into the area, and all the winter prey base, such as elk or moose, is gone. If the traditional prey base is not available for these animals, the chances of the livestock becoming prey increases dramatically," Fontaine said.

Although the move involved the states of Idaho and Montana, all four wolves were within the Central Idaho Wolf Recovery Area and were not moved outside experimental population boundaries.

According to Curt Mack, wolf recovery lead for the Nez Perce Tribe, "The successful relocation of these pairs of wolves before they had the chance to set up a permanent territory and produce pups is a win-win situation. It should prove to be beneficial in keeping wolf-livestock conflicts low and alleviate concerns over losses for land owners in the Big Hole area of Montana. It will also reduce the probability of the pairs establishing a territorial range near livestock, and will give both pairs of wolves a chance to contribute to recovery and delisting."

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Wolf relocation has been used as a management tool in the wolf recovery program for more than a decade. On August 10, subadult wolf B-103 of Idaho's Wildhorse Pack was relocated from the Copper Basin into Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness after it was implicated in the depredation of one calf in the Copper Basin. Ground trapping efforts continue to attempt to relocate one additional subadult and to place collars on other members of the pack so that wolf managers can monitor them more effectively. The Wildhorse Pack has been in the Copper Basin area for the past two years, and produced their second litter of five pups this year. Currently the pack consists of the two alpha adults, two subadults, and five pups.

The annual gray wolf recovery population count will be completed at the end of the year, and the numbers of wolves will surpass the year 2000 count of about 200 wolves. Presently, 16 packs and 75 pups have been documented in year 2001, which will contribute positively toward recovery goals.

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 94-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses 535 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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